

Yoruba?Orature: The Fundamental Basis for Teaching Yorubá Numeral

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Abstract

Without mincing words, there is a gradual loss of long-aged tradition, a method of equipping young ones for life. In Yorùbá traditional setting, the teaching of Yorùbá numerals remains an authentic means of transmitting culture from one generation to another. This paper attempts to examine that Yorùbá traditional education is deeply rooted in Yorùbá orature. Equally, it shows that the education system had been part and parcel of the society and it is not the training given in modern education but education which the indigenous black people of Africa offered. Additionally, the paper establishes that Yorùbá orature serves both recreational as well as educational purposes to prove that the use of Yorùbá orature is a fundamental basis for teaching the young ones the Yorùbá numerals as embedded in the culture and tradition of the people. Apart from this immediate and apparent function of teaching the young ones, the teaching of Yorùbá numerals initiates child(ren) into the various phases of life. This research work adopted both primary and secondary research methods.

Index terms— yorùbá orature, yorùbá numerals, traditional education, western-education, society, theory, culture, children.

1 Introduction

his paper examines how Yorùbá traditional education is deeply-rooted in Yorùbá orature. According to a Yorùbá proverb which says, "Àkùrò? ti lómi té? lè? kí òjò tò rò? si" (A marshy land already contains water before the rain falls). Before the advent of Western education in the mid-nineteenth century, Yorùbá had a fundamental means of educating their children. Therefore, when the Europeans came and introduced their system of formal education in the society, it was not new because it was regarded as an additional and perhaps a modern way of seemingly developing the intelligence of the people. The traditional educational system had been part and parcel of the society before experiencing the school pudding. This Yorùbá traditional education system is in line with ??woni (1975: 357) when he says:

No education system stands apart from the society which establishes it, and education has purposes which it must achieve if that society is to continue in the right direction. Education, therefore, draws inspiration and nourishment from society and contributes in turn to social opportunities for growth and renewal.

In essence, Yorùbá educated elites should appreciate that education has to do with people's culture and tradition. ??ester (1957: 9) rightly observes this when he defines education as:

The culture which each generation purposely gives is to those who are to be its successors, to qualify them for at least keeping up, and if possible for raising the level of improvement which it has attained.

The obvious implication is that it seems impossible to educate the child properly or effectively outside his cultural environment. Long More (1959: 7) justifies this when he says:

If a man does away with his traditional way of living and throws away his good customs, he had better be certain he has something worth more invaluable to replace them.

It is pertinent that scholars have not intensified much research effort on how a Yorùbá child can be taught Yorùbá numerals effectively through Yorùbá orature. Also, one should realise that the Yorùbá traditional society has something to proffer educational theory and practice, which is brought out lucidly in its educational pattern

through a combination of precepts and orature. By orature we mean, rich corporal of texts as are derivable from folklore, proverbs, chants, recitations, songs, riddles, folktales, and incantations, presented in oral form for the aim of animating and influencing the behavior of each other in a speech society.

Yorùbá orature is used amongst the Yorùbá to express a thought in vivid metaphor, to describe a person or thing in more obscure metaphor, to provide a form of amusement and it has an instructive value. In essence, Yorùbá orature combines recreational and educational features. Some scholars have researched the study of Yorùbá traditional method of education; for example, Ajàyí 1990, examines riddles and the Yorùbá child: while Callaway (1975) explains indigenous education in Yorùbá society. Fáfúnwá (1975) concerns himself on education in the mother tongue among the Yorùbá people of Nigeria. Fájánà (1966) attempts to appreciate some aspects of Yorùbá traditional education and education policy in Nigeria traditional society in (1972) respectively. Also, Obidi (1997) writes on Yorùbá indigenous education in while O? lájubù ??1978) dealt with the use of Yorùbá folktales as a means of moral education.

This paper has attempted a micro-study of Yorùbá orature as a means of teaching Yorùbá numerals. That is, the preceding writers have not examined the reading of numerals in the Yorùbá thought system.

2 II.

3 Analysis

In Yorùbá society, song serves as a means of communication. The Yorùbá people sing on all occasions. Such occasions include a time of joy and sorrow. In essence, one could conclude that songs permeate Yorùbá life. Consequently, songs serve as one of the means through which the Yorùbá teach numerals, as discussed below.

4 Orin (Songs)

Lílé

5 Èèrò wá wò wá o o

People should come and watch us.

From the preceding example, it is observed that numbers one to ten are sung in a sonorous voice to teach the young ones the Yorùbá numerals. As the Yorùbá children are lovers of songs, it is very stress-free to teach them how to count one to ten. By rendering this song repeatedly, the act of counting becomes part and parcel of their knowledge.

6 Ìwúre

Ìwúre is the prayerful aspect of the oral medium of communication between man and gods in Yorùbá culture. Like songs, i?úre also permeates Yorùbá life. In essence, the Yorùbá pray on every occasion either in joy or sorrow. Therefore, it will not be a surprise if the Yorùbá uses ìwúre as one of the means of teaching their children numerals, as it is analysed below: One searches more for whatever he has. Ení: Ànínó? owó,

Owó yòò máa wá e? wálé Money will search for you. O? mo? yòò máa wá e? wálé Children will search for you Ire ayé yòò máa wá e? wálé. Às? e? ! Good fortunes will search for you. Amen

From the above excerpt, one realizes that the Yorùbá can teach their children numerals accurately through supplicatory devices (ìwúre).

7 Ewì Eré Òs? ùpá (Moonlight Poetry)

It is important to note that in Yorùbá culture, children often go out during the moonlight time to socialize together. During this occasion, they chant various children's poems to display their intellectual wit. Also, such chanting serves as the means of training their tongue or enhancing speech ability. In essence, moonlight poetry serves as means of education and even as a serious test of mental capacity. That is ten

The above example is not only used to enhance children's smooth speech ability but mainly to teach them to count numerals from one to ten. When this is done repeatedly during the moonlight game, obviously, children become experts in counting. In totality, such moonlight poetry is an indirect way of teaching numerals in Yorùbá culture.

8 E? se? Ifá (Ifá Corpus)

Ifá corpus is not only used by the diviners to predict the future but also serves as a way of teaching young ones how to count numbers. This basic knowledge enriches children's prowess. ??he From the preceding, the researcher observed that the Ifá corpus teaches children the act of counting numerals. This system roots seriously in Yorùbá's traditional society.

9 Ewì O? mo? dé (Children's Poetry)

In Yorùbá culture, some poems connect to children's games. Such poems are known as "Ewì O? mo? dé" (children poetry). Children render these types of poems during the moonlight game to open or commence the

day's activities. The children usually render them one after the other to determine whether a child makes a mistake or a free performance. In essence, such poems serve to develop children's mental skills. It is realized from the above excerpt that "Ewì O? mo? dé" is a device not only to teach children numerals but also to refresh their memory.

10 Àlò? Àpagbè (Folktales)

Folktales serve as a device not only to teach children good morals but also to teach them numerals in Yorùbá culture. A good example is a folktale titled, "Lákítì àti Ará Ò ? run" (Lákítì and Men of the heaven). In the distant past, there was a quarrel between Lákítì and the men of the underworld, which invariably led to physical combat. The men of the underworld numbered ten confronted Lákítì in turns in a fight to finish the combat. The combat began with the one-headed man who came forward to slug it out with Lákítì in the presence of a large audience. Shortly after the combat started, the drummers commenced saying thus, Lílé:

Lákítì Within a twinkle of eyes, Lákítì defeated the two-headed man by killing him. All the people hailed him for his victory.

The three-headed man came out desperately to fight Lákítì. This time it was a tug of war. The drummers commenced their usual song thus: Lílé:

Lákítì kò lè jà (abbl) Solo: Lákítì cannot fight (etc.)

Ègbè: Njé? ó lè jà? (bbl) Chorus: Can he fight? (etc.)

It took Lákítì no time to win the dwell by killing his challenger. The shout of joy over Lákítì's victory spread all over the places.

The four-headed man came out, and Lákítì defeated him in the same grand style. The five-headed took his turn, and it was the same story of victory for Lákítì.

The six-headed man challenged Lákítì to the fight to finish the war. But luck was in Lákítì's favor.

The seven-headed man came out, aiming to defeat Lákítì. But, the whole thing was just like a dream because Lákítì recorded a victory over his victim.

The eight-headed man promised to give Lákítì a tough fight but all in vain. Lákítì claimed victory over his challenger.

The nine-headed man came out with full force to silence Lákítì just with a few blows. But Lákítì escaped defeat. This victory earned Lákítì instant popularity before the audience.

The ten-headed man came out so determined to avenge all the death blow that Lákítì had rained on his fellow men. As soon as the fight began, both the drummers and the signers went into action, thus: Lílé:

Lákítì kò lè jà (bbl) Solo: Lákítì cannot fight (etc.)

Ègbè: Njé? ó lè jà? (bbl) Chorus: Can he fight? (etc.)

The ten-headed man took the advantage that Lákítì was already tired of his previous fights. He unleashed dead blows on Lákítì, and he dropped down dead. This event saddened the audience, and they went home disappointed and unceremoniously. The tenheaded man performed a miracle by resuscitating his fellow men, numbering nine, and all of them, including the ten-headed man, went home alive in happiness and elaborate jubilations. Surprisingly, Lákítì's son, who was the only one left behind, came out from his hide-out after all the ten men of the underworld had left to rescue his father. Both Lákítì and his son went home in joy too.

It is worth noting that one of the numerous devices adopted by the Yorùbá to teach the young ones numerals in society often uses the above folktale. Also, in the above folktale, Lákítì's challengers were numbered ten. He defeated the first nine, that is, oneheaded man, two-headed man, three-headed man, four-headed man, five-headed man, six-headed man, seven-headed man, eight-headed man, and nineheaded man. But unfortunately, the ten-headed man defeated Lákítì as a result of his tiredness.

11 III.

12 Conclusion

It is apparent to stress in this paper that the use of Yorùbá orature as a fundamental basis for teaching young ones the Yorùbá numerals ensues the culture and tradition of the people. Also, teaching numerals effectively through Yorùbá orature has started in the distant past before the advent of westernization of Yorùbá education.

The various ways of imparting Yorùbá numerals into the knowledge of Yorùbá children are through song, ìwíre, moonlight poetry, folktales, children poetry, and Ifá literary corpus. These various ways permeate the Yorùbá life because the system is deep-rooted in Yorùbá culture and tradition. The method should be encouraged to ensure that the children's upbringing is a continuing partnership between the school and Yorùbá society.

Finally, it is shown in this paper that the Yorùbá traditional society has something to offer for education theory and practice. Indeed, this fact, which sustains the teaching of Yorùbá numerals, is a reason why orature still continues as fundamental means by which we teach Yorùbá numerals to children despite the challenge of western education.

È? Agbó? n ayé kò ní ta ó? ta:	Three: Agbó? n (widely) will not sting you
Oyin ayé kò ní ta ó? , Àkéekèè ayé kò ní ta ó?	Oyin (honey bee) will not sting you. Akéekèè (scorpion) will bot sting you. Amen.
È? È? rín lo? mo? dé ? rín kawó, rín:	Four: It is with happiness that kids count money
È? rín làgbàlagbà ? rín pobì È? rín làgbàrà ? rín pàdé odò ló? nà	It is with joy that adults pieces cola nut It is with happiness that erosion meets with the river,
Tè? rín, tè? ye? ni ò? rò? re? yóò máa jásí. Às? e? !	Your ways will result in fortune and happiness. Amen
ÀrúnÀrùn ò ní so? é? ló? jò? kale? . Às? e? !	Five: A prolonged disease will not attack you. Amen.
È? È? fale fako ni tètúkó? fà:	Six: Hoes bring forth booties everywhere;
Gbogbo ohun tí ó bá fo? wó? fà Yóò máa jásí rere Ìfà yóò máa wo? lé tò? é? wá. Às? e? !	whatever you struggle for, will come into being Booties will come on your way. Amen
Èje: Bí Olúgbó? n s? orò yóò kije Bí Are? sà s? orò yóò kije Às? eyo? rí yóò máa jé? tire. Às? e? !	Seven: Olúgbó? n's festival lasts seven days. Arè? sà's festival lasts seven days, Success will be yours. Amen.
È? Jò? jò? agbò níí mágbò níyì jo? :	Eight: Agbò's (ox) overgrown hair gives it re- spect Your home will be orderly. Your ways will be good. Amen.
È? Ilé ayé 'a san e? sówó sán:	Nine: Life will favour you with money Life will favor you with children. Life will favor you with good things. Your future will be better than the present. Amen.
Á san é? só? mo? Á san é? sí ire gbogbo Alé? yóò san é? ju òwúrò? lo? . Às? e? !	
È? Wíwá ni a ? wá mó? to? wó? e? wá: ni	Ten:

[Note: ànímó? o? mo? One: You will have more money; you will have more children. Ànímó? àìkú tíí s? e badlè? o? rò? , As? e? ! You will have long life which supersedes everything. Amen Èjì:]

Figure 1:

Ègbè:	kò lè jà (2ce) Njé? ó lè jà?	Solo:	Lákítì cannot fight (2ce) Can he
Lílè:	(2ce) Kó gbé e párá kó fí dá	Chorus:	fight? (2ce) He lifts promptly
Ègbè:	Njé? ó lè jà? Kó yàn bò? n-	Solo:	to win Can he fight? He sounds
Lílè:	ùn bí ìbò? n ?jé? ó lè jà?	Chorus:	like a gun Can he fight? (etc.)
Ègbè: In-	Abbl. Lákítì kò lè jà (bbl)	Solo:	Lákítì cannot fight (etc) Can he
stantly,	Njé? ó lè jà? (abbl)	Chorus:	fight? (etc)
Lílè:		Solo:	
Ègbè:		Chorus:	

Figure 2:

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